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STREET SPIRIT

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JUSTICE NEWS & HOMELESS BLUES IN THE BAY AREA

Housing or Holocaust Weapons?

The poor and homeless pay the final price for the nuclear arms race

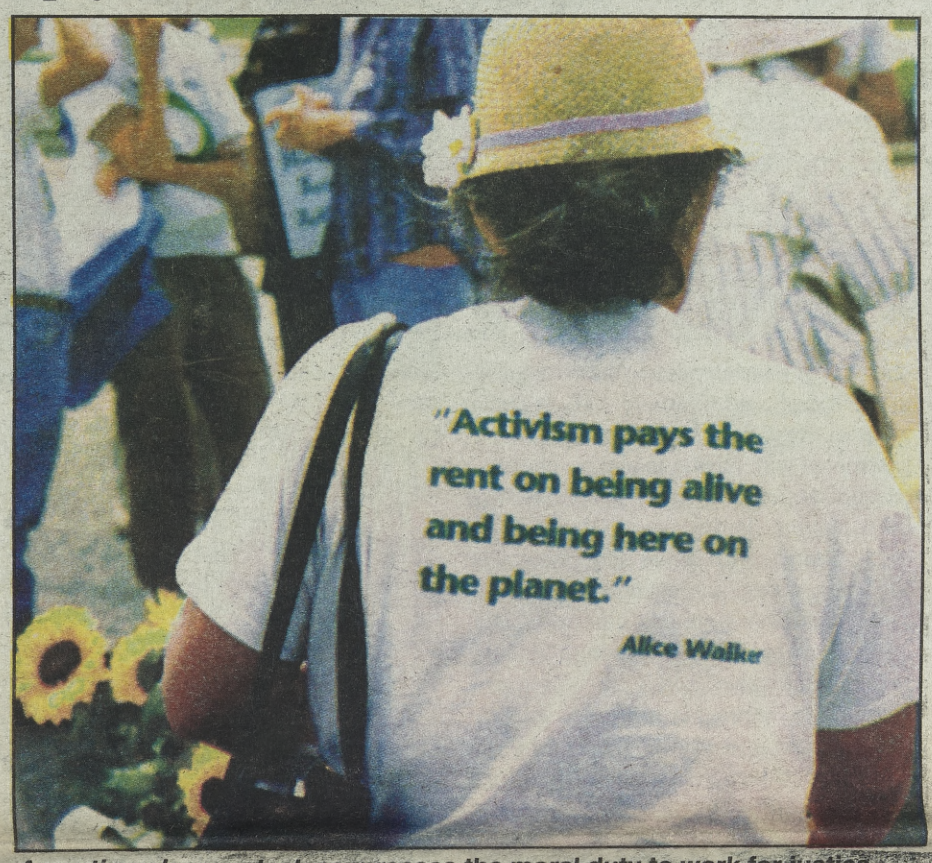
There is a damaging link between nuclear warheads designed at Livermore Lab and widespread poverty in Alameda County.

By Al Jones and Jackie Cabasso

"History is written by the victors. Thus, the heinous massacre that was Hiroshima has been handed down to us as a perfectly justified act of war. As a result, for over 50 years we have never directly confronted the full implications of this terrifying act for the future of the human race." — Takashi Hiraoka, Mayor of Hiroshima, Japan, testimony to the International Court of Justice, November, 1995

On August 6, the 52nd anniversary of the U.S. atomic bombing of Hiroshima, about 150 people gathered at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory to protest ongoing nuclear weapons research and development. Following a spirited rally, 43 nonviolent demonstrators were arrested at the Lab gate for blocking it in an act of civil disobedience, then handcuffed, taken into custody, and later released. There was little press coverage. Why were they there? In 1997, why were they still protesting the nuclear arms race?

By contrast, in the early 1980s, huge numbers of people, fearful for their lives and their children's futures, flocked to Livermore to protest the insanity of the arms race. Thousands were arrested for nonviolently blockading the roads leading into Livermore Lab. Hundreds of protesters spent weeks in jail. Mass trials received international media attention. Nuclear weapons were big news.



An anti-nuclear protester **expresses the moral duty to work for justice.**

Then, nearly six years ago, the Cold War suddenly ended. The so-called "evil empire" collapsed, and with it, the national security justification for maintaining huge stockpiles of nuclear weapons. Public fears of nuclear holocaust subsided with a great collective sigh of relief, and awareness of the nuclear threat faded.

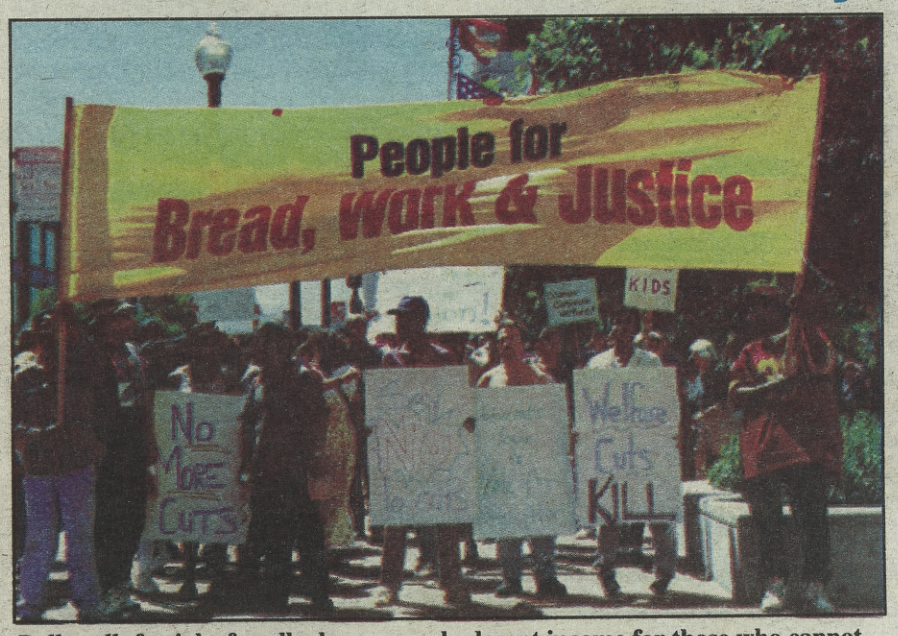
Concern about drugs and street violence grew, and hunger and homelessness increased. While more and more of the nation's wealth was concentrated in the hands of fewer and fewer people and big corporations got hefty tax breaks, the politicians began clamoring for a balanced budget, blaming welfare and Medicare spending for the deficit.

But nuclear weapons have not gone away. Despite government claims of "dwindling" stockpiles, there are still approximately 40,000 nuclear weapons in the world. Submarines carrying the most deadly and sophisticated weapons of mass destruction imaginable are patrolling the oceans ready to target any city on earth at a moment's notice. The United States plans to maintain indefinitely a nuclear arsenal of more than 10,000 warheads. And earlier this year, the first new nuclear weapon entered the U.S. stockpile since 1989. (Last year, the U.S. covertly threatened to use this earth-penetrating weapon against an alleged underground chemical weapons plant in Libya.)

In fact, spending on nuclear weapons is increasing while funding for human needs is being slashed. Since the first work on the atom bomb began in 1940, the United States has invested more than $4 trillion in its nuclear arsenal — *an amount nearly equal to the national debt.* The Pentagon still spends $67.4 million *each day* to prepare to fight a nuclear war. This year, the U.S. government will pour approximately $30 billion into nuclear weapons and weapons-related activities — more than 10% of its obscenely bloated military budget.

See **Homes or Holocaust** *page 10*

Oakland Protesters Decry Welfare Cuts



Rally calls **for jobs for all who can work, decent income for those who cannot.**

Photo and story by Lydia Gans

The one year anniversary of President Clinton's signing of the so-called Welfare Reform bill was on Friday, August 22. Throughout the nation, rallies were held to mark it as a day of protest and mobilization. In Oakland, more than 300 people gathered at the Federal Building to hear music and speakers from a broad coalition of organizations brought together by People for Bread, Work and Justice. The rally called for seven demands:

1) Reverse cuts in food stamps, AFDC, General Assistance and SSI.

2) End divisive attacks on communities of color, women and immigrants.

3) Prevent mass unemployment that lowers wages for everyone.

4) Guarantee jobs at living wages.

5) Guarantee adequate income for people who cannot work.

6) Create jobs which address the unmet needs of our communities.

7) Tax corporations and the wealthy to pay for jobs and social programs.

James Thomas from Emergency Services Network acted as M.C. Speakers called for unity and continued actions to reverse the tide of anti-poor legislation. Pat St. Onge, director of the Berkeley Emergency Food and Housing Project, touched on the need for unity when she declared: "We are all connected. We all share the responsibility for those who cannot care for themselves."

Renee Saucedo, from the Coalition on Immigrant Rights, introduced Daniela Sarza, an immigrant and a welfare recipient who asked, "What will happen to children and the elderly and the disabled who can't work?"

Guitane Williams explained the need for an extension of General Assistance (GA). People are being cut off GA who are looking for work but have not been able to find any; in Alameda and Sacramento Counties, those deemed "employable" now receive GA benefits for only three months out of the year.

As for people who are working, many are not earning enough to subsist

See **Oakland Welfare Protest** *page 12*

Justice for All

by Monique Singletary

Oakland resident Monique Singletary gave eloquent voice to the need to build a humane society at the August 22 protest of welfare cuts.

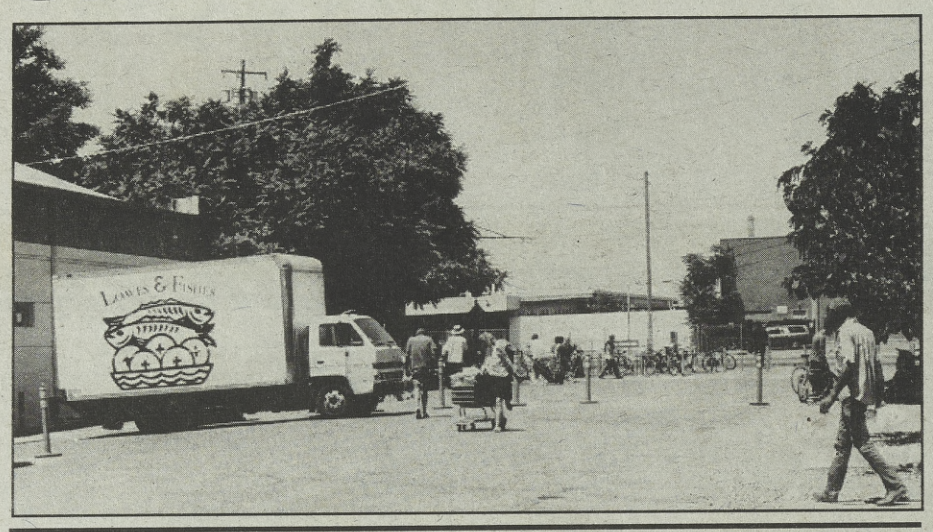
Today I'm going to speak for the people. When I say people, that means you and me, regardless of your race, nationality, social or economic background. Because of the issues we as a people are addressing today, none of those qualities are important or have a place here! So if you are extremely sensitive, please put your feelings in your pocket for a moment, so that the reality of this message can be heard clearly and processed effectively in your mind.

"We the people, in order to form a more perfect union..." was written long ago by the founders of our constitution, to assure that the quality of our system would continue to be enhanced for the people and by the people.

The welfare reform policy does not and will not assure any of us a quality system of living, because the have-nots don't get an opportunity to grow and become productive members of our society, and the haves become victims! My last statement has nothing to do with compassion or lack of compassion for either side of the spectrum. But it has everything to do with how comfortable and productive, or how uncomfortable and unproductive our nation will become as a whole in the future!

See **Justice for All** *page 12*

Homeless People Will Pay the Price for Sacramento's Attack on Loaves & Fishes





Photos by Christina Stock

Redevelopment plans have put serious pressure on Loaves and Fishes. ***"The poor people have to be moved out. The only way that's going to happen is over the dead body of Loaves and Fishes."*** *— LeRoy Chatfield, director of Loaves and Fishes*

by Christina Stock

The City of Sacramento and Loaves and Fishes reached a settlement recently in a seven-month legal battle, but the dispute will have a lasting effect. The trouble began two years ago with discrepancies in the charity's special use permits and was fueled by pressure from the local business community and residents. The situation reached a climax when the City sued Loaves and Fishes for permit violations, calling it a public nuisance, with Loaves and Fishes countersuing for violations of their right to practice religious duties.

The political battle divided the community at large and even supporters of Loaves and Fishes. "Individuals who are interested and concerned about other people had to make a decision about supporting Loaves and Fishes despite the controversy," said LeRoy Chatfield, director of Loaves and Fishes.

Longtime advocates of Loaves and Fishes became even stronger, but more casual supporters grew leery. "Other people were turned off by the fact that they were confronted with having to make a decision of the rightness or the wrongness of the issue," said Chatfield. "There come times in every person's life when you are confronted with having to make a choice," he said, noting that many people simply chose another charity.

"In short term, Loaves and Fishes has been hurt severely financially," Chatfield said, "and I can't pretend otherwise. But in the same breath, I believe in the longer term that Loaves and Fishes is more financially secure. It hurts the guests. Those are the ones bearing the burden."

The controversy has taken its toll on the immediate future of Loaves and Fishes' finances. Most services in Friendship Park were closed during the month of August to avoid running into debt. Showers, drug and alcohol counseling, the library, Mustard Seed school, and Maryhouse day shelter for women are all scheduled to close.

The continual threat of losing a vital institution has united Loaves and Fishes guests in their concern. Says Chatfield, "I think the Loaves and Fishes guests, and that is a broad spectrum of people, I think it brought them together. People felt part of the process in trying to secure some justice. I can't even count the number of guests who came up to me and personally thanked me, or offered their encouragement. There was a feeling that we were all in this together."

The noon meal will continue to be served daily. "The dining room will never close," says Chatfield. "That will always be there for our guests." "Sunshine" is a homeless woman who is unable to work due to trauma resulting from physical abuse. She depends on the noon meal. "A lot of times I go to bed hungry, but I know I'm going to get a hot meal here. I can save part of that to eat at night, and I'm used to that. I'm so grateful to have this, but I'm worried sick about next month."

Many have realized the threat of losing the one place where they feel accepted. Paula, a homeless guest, says, "Right here, all these people, me for one, have finally found a community."

Sunshine says, "I am trying to figure out where I can bathe, if I can't go to Maryhouse next month. When you're out

See **Loaves & Fishes** *page 11*

Struggling with the Sleeping Ban in Santa Cruz

Organizers are trying to fashion a ballot initiative dedicated to the moral principle that sleep is not an economic privilege but a basic human right.

by Robert Norse

As summer turns to fall in Santa Cruz, protest against the anti-homeless Sleeping Ban has taken six paths. First, simply as a matter of survival, each night more than 750 people sleep outside — hence, illegally, since sleeping is banned from 11 p.m. to 8:30 a.m. Police arrest a few, ticket a few more, and harass still more.

Many homeless sleepers are ignored or overlooked, which prompts complacent City Councilmembers to pat themselves on the back and praise Santa Cruz's kinder, gentler sleeping ban. The Council majority broke the back of the peaceful City Hall Sleepers Protest Vigil last year with police harassment and a court order.

The second path of protest has led through a tangle of court proceedings resulting from the hundreds of Sleepcrime tickets issued at the City Hall vigil last year. Environmental and homeless activists Sandrea Roth and Patrick Ring faced trespass, and other manufactured charges in several jury trials, but ultimately entered pleas to other charges in exhaustion. They are considering going to jail voluntarily instead of doing community service. Dan Hopkins, cofounder of the vigil, and Robert Flory, long-time Food Not Bombs activist, are appealing their convictions. Flory's 24 Sleepcrime convictions will mean weeks in jail if he loses his appeal. Many other 'sleep-criminals' await the outcome of Hopkins' appeal of the Sleeping Ban law.

In September, Hopkins' eloquent probono attorney, Kate Wells, will defend Sean Alemi in the first misdemeanor sleeping trial in Santa Cruz history. Alemi co-founded the vigil with Hopkins and runs Feed the People, a high-profile food distribution program to the poor downtown. The court-bound carrot-cutter boisterously supports homeless people harassed under the Sitting and Sparechanging Bans.

This winter, Alemi was jailed for five months on groundless drug charges, motivated, some believe, by police resentment of his protests at Santa Cruz City Hall. He refused a deal where his misdemeanor sleep charges would be reduced to infractions — a favorite tactic allowing police to arrest and jail homeless protesters on misdemeanors, then deny them a jury trial and court-appointed lawyer by reducing the charges at trial over their objections.

Six protesters who initially claimed conditional victory this spring with a hung jury in the Chaingang Lockdown Trial later "pled out" at the second trial to get on with their lives. Exhausted and eager to move on, they accepted a year's probation, some community service, and no jail time. Their crime: "disrupting a public meeting" by chaining themselves to City Hall furniture to protest the City Council's legendary refusal to decriminalize sleep for the homeless.

This second path of protest has proved even harsher for some. The FBI interrogations of two well-known organizers, Jim Cosner and Linda Lemaster, spread fear through the homeless activist community this spring. Fiery Miguel Balderos, an often off-the-wall activist, languishes in jail on what many believe was fabricated testimony. He awaits trial in September on felony charges for allegedly breaking into and vandalizing City Hall.

The third path of resistance to City Hall's sleep-busting law has been the rise of spontaneous individual battles in the courts. Every week, nearly a dozen sleeping cases show up on court dockets, from months, sometimes years before. Increasingly, victims are standing up and demanding court trials, which they usually lose, even when the law is on their side. Raymond Mason, an older homeless man, was fined $277 for sleeping with the permission of the owner in a fenced-in yard, one of the few explicit exceptions allowed by Santa Cruz law. Ignoring the law, Commissioner Cloud ruled that written permission was not enough — he had to subpoena or bring in the property owner.

The fourth path to topple the Sleeping Ban may be renewed public protest with allied groups. Stepped up evictions in the city have led embattled tenants to form the Santa Cruz Tenants Union under the leadership of Donna Deiss, who won a retaliatory eviction trial last year and has begun full-time organizing under the

See **Santa Cruz Sleeping Ban** *page 11*

My Sister, My Sister

An Exhibit Celebrating the Women's Daytime Drop-In Center in Berkeley

Photographs by Meredith Stout
Poetry by Zelma Brown
with Women from the Center

Artists' Reception
Friday, September 19
6:30-8:30 pm

Exhibit runs all September at: **Gallery of the Center for Psychological Studies**
1398 Solano Ave., Albany, 510-524-0291
Gallery Hours MWF 10-12 & 2-5; TTh 10-5



Homeless Teens and the Youth Curfew

Santa Cruz imposes a curfew, but how can politicians send the homeless youth home?

by Becky Johnson



Art by Christa Occhiogrosso

Homeless youth in Santa Cruz fall into several categories: punks (the largest group), hippies, gothics, and deadheads. They vary in their attitudes towards drug and alcohol use, and their disenfranchisement from society. The causes of their homelessness vary, but a significant number are escaping homes in which the adults are abusive, alcoholic, or over-controlling. An unusually high percentage of gay teens are homeless, having been rejected from strict religious homes.

Emily, who is now 19 years old, spent several years living on the streets of Santa Cruz with her boyfriend. Several of her friends on the street are runaways from abusive homes, some from foster homes. Others are throwaways, kicked out by their parents. "Some teens are homeless by choice," says Emily. "All the kids like it downtown. They feel welcomed. They like hanging out with their friends."

In its haste to enact a curfew with as little public debate as possible, the Santa Cruz City Council chose summertime, when schools are out, both colleges are nearly empty, and the enormous number of teens in the city are from places like Cleveland and Connecticut. Their 'stealth' process involved no advance announcement of the committee meeting from which the curfew sprang, only a day's advance notice for the first appearance of the law, and a late-night schedule for debate (excluding young people and homeless people in shelter programs).

The teen curfew was proposed three years ago as part of a package of anti-homeless laws involving bans on sitting, panhandling, camping and sleeping. Many of the ordinances were passed in 1994, but the youth curfew was dropped. An anti-tarrying curfew passed the County in early 1996, but was rejected by the City.

The troubling dilemma of where to put wandering homeless youth may have delayed the curfew's enactment in the more liberal, urban, university-centered Santa Cruz downtown. Pacific Avenue in Santa Cruz — like Berkeley's Telegraph Avenue, Haight Street in San Francisco and Eugene's University Avenue — has long supported a thriving counterculture, where young people find shelter, protective cover and simpatico spirits.

SAFETY IN NUMBERS

"Homeless teens feel safety in numbers and tend to gather together after dark," reports Emily. A service provider, who fears for her funding, anonymously said that homeless youth frequently gather after hours to find a squat or safe sleeping space. The curfew will criminalize that.

County sheriffs have no provision for homeless youth, other than the comment that there aren't many of them. Calls to the county sheriff for more information were not returned by press time.

The City has a nighttime Sleeping and Camping Ban, making the position of homeless youth and their parents even more precarious at night. Authorities used the planned opening of a homeless youth shelter 10 miles out of town for 20 teens as an "answer" to concerns about the curfew's effect on youth. Above the Line's Shelter, while not yet open, cleared the final permit hurdle two months ago.

That the City Council's action is another case of smoke and mirrors is clear from the conditions of that permit: no court referrals will be accepted. It is intended to be a voluntary facility only. With only 20 spaces in a county which has an estimated 3000-5000 homeless population, it will most likely have a waiting list before it even opens. It is hardly the "solution" for what to do with homeless youth picked up for being outside after curfew. Is it now to become a series of holding cells for 15-year-olds caught chatting downtown on Pacific Avenue after the movies?

In a speech to the Santa Cruz City Council, long-time homeless activist and writer Robert Norse, who hosts a weekly radio show on the civil rights of homeless people on Free Radio Santa Cruz (96.3 FM), expressed particular concern that the curfew could inequitably impact homeless youth. A frequent speaker at council meetings, Robert sometimes appears in a bathrobe complete with teddy bear, as a gesture of recognition for those who must bathe, eat, drink, brush their teeth, have sex and sleep in the public eye as they have no homes, and hence no privacy.

Commenting on a portion of the curfew law which exempts young people on the sidewalk in front of their house, Robert said, "Scores of homeless youth, after all, don't have a special section of sidewalk in front of their house where it is legal for them to be after 11 p.m. This exception specifically benefits those who are not homeless; more profoundly, those who have homes are not forced as a matter of necessity to use public and semi-public spaces at night as homeless people do."

Robert asked a series of questions which councilmembers had failed to take into account and are still unanswered.

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

"What are the consequences of youth curfews on homeless parents? Are their children to be taken from them for being out late? What facilities are really available for homeless youth? Will Santa Cruz be setting up San Jose-style holding stations for youth? Will those who are not picked up by their parents be sent to the bulging juvenile hall? How can parents be located, when they are hiding from the police in fear of our City Council's Camping Ban law? Will homeless youth be pressured to rat on their families who are sleeping illegally outside or in vehicles?"

At the County level, Santa Cruz Sheriff Mark Tracy and District Attorney Danner pushed a similar teen curfew through the Board of Supervisors without any real examination of the concerns of critics. There, as at the City Council level, the word "homeless" did not appear in the discussion. The homeless, as ever, were invisible and unmentionable. Another layer of criminalization had been added for homeless youth: by day it is largely illegal to sit down, spare-change, make and sell jewelry, skateboard, or smoke. By night it is illegal to sleep. Now it is illegal to associate with others in public after 11 p.m.

How will the police deal with homeless youth after curfew hours in Santa Cruz? During the day, they need little pretext to stop young or homeless people. At night, police now will feel all the more empowered to harass. Emily said, "The cops don't understand what kids are up against. Sometimes the kid's getting beat or their mom is getting beat. Most cops have never been homeless." A curfew law gives a pretext to police to check the identification of those who look like they might be under curfew age. Emily states, "Kids will purposely not carry ID. Sometimes they're getting drugs and they don't want to get a record. They will give a false name when they are arrested."

YOUTH CURFEWS IN OTHER CITIES

How have other cities handled teen curfews? San Francisco and Oakland rejected curfews in the last five years for fear they would be selectively enforced, particularly against minorities. They heeded criticisms that the laws would impose a police solution on social problems, and trash the civil liberties of young people under the guise of protecting them.

Tamara Milagros, director of Teens on Target in Oakland, a group that worked hard to defeat the curfew, explained that while curfews are almost always promoted as a way to protect young people, the time of greatest injury occurring to youth

See **Youth Curfew** *page 11*

Street Spirit

September, 1997

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by Linda Lemaster

The new Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF, replacing AFDC) will go to only *certain* needy families. Counties are under pressure to get 80% of their recipient families employed fast. California adopted the tightest "time limits" in the nation, according to Sandy Brown of Fair Share Network, a statewide welfare-rights advocacy group.

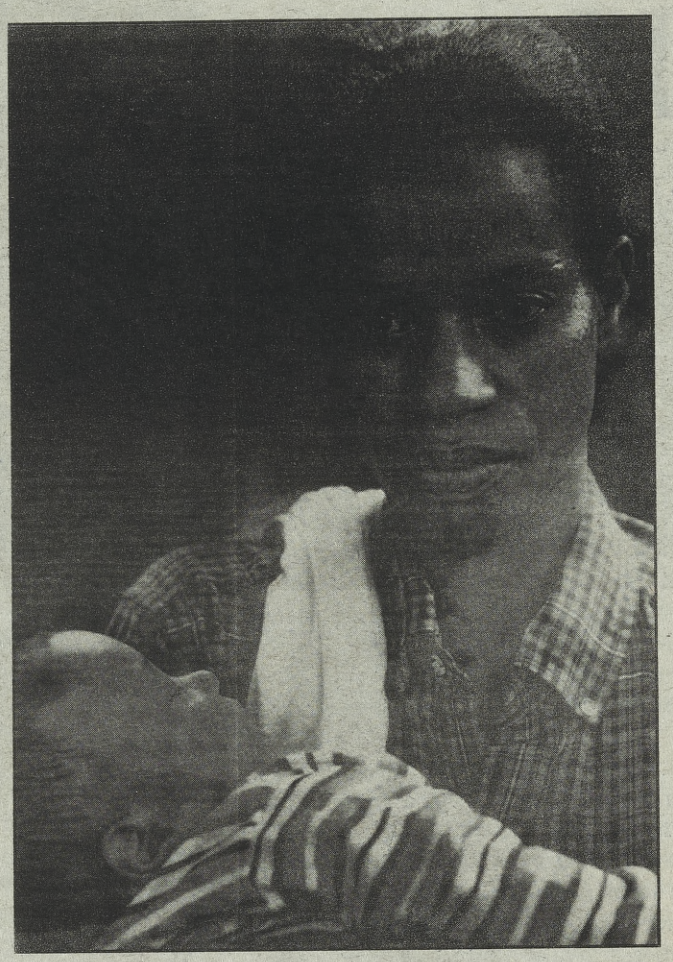
State governors and counties decide who gets aid, and under what workfare conditions. There's not a *dime* for housing in the state's new welfare law. Families will have to prove children's immunizations and school attendance. Workfare must be valued the same as minimum wage for other workers, according to an appeals court decision.

California gave food stamps to legal immigrant children and elders, which the Feds had canceled, then ended prenatal and birth care for newborns of illegal immigrants. The State Legislature provided no support to General Assistance, which is now the last resort for families expelled from the AFDC program.

Counties must move to get something in place before year's end. Don't be mislead by the wording: Look for funds for jobs. Or start looking for your square on the sidewalk.

'My Sister, My Sister'





Photos and story by Meredith Stout

All photos accompanying this article are of members of the Daytime Women's Drop-In Center in Berkeley.

"Inside the camera, they are so close to me, so focused, so beautiful, that it takes my breath away. For a moment, inside the lens, 'My Sisters' and I are one."

There is a homey, crowded, little shingled bungalow in Berkeley called the Women's Daytime Drop-In Center which has been a haven to East Bay women in crisis for the past nine years. The Drop-In Center welcomes all women who are dealing with financial and/or domestic catastrophes in their lives, ranging from abandonment to drug and alcohol problems to abuse. They are usually homeless. They are always in need.

The Center provides women and their children with a safe place to be during the day while they work to stabilize their lives and make themselves self-sufficient again. While they are there, women can get housing counseling and referrals of all kinds, use a clean bathroom and a telephone, count on getting some breakfast and a hot noon-time meal, or find a place to rest. Clients can also attend parenting groups, participate in support workshops on AIDS education or how to get a job, and they can make crafts and jewelry to be sold at holiday fairs.

The house is a cooperative enterprise where everyone does a daily chore such as sorting the recycling, cooking lunch or pulling weeds in the back garden from which vegetables and salad are brought to the table all summer long.

Local nighttime shelters cannot provide daytime care, and women who have nowhere to go are especially vulnerable to harassment and lack of facilities on the streets. One woman said that on Sundays, when the Drop-In Center is closed, she spends the entire day moving from church to church. "I carry my privacy in here," she said, patting the small pack belted to her waist. Being on the streets is particularly difficult for the many women who have their children with them, where there is no home to go to after a visit to the park. At the Center, with the help of other women, volunteers, and staff, they can get some relief from the burdens of single parenting, a challenging task at best.

One young mother settled her children at the table for their lunch. "My mental plate's so full," she said, "I can't get through the first helping before there's another one piled on top."

Sometimes women come to the Center for only a few days and when they leave, they are not seen again. For others, the sense of family remains with them, and they keep coming back "just to say hello." One woman who is back in school said, "I don't know where I'd be now if it hadn't been for this place."

The Women's Daytime Drop-In Center began in 1988 as a volunteer organization; it now has a full-time professional staff, as well as volunteers who provide assistance of every kind. Often those volunteers are former clients, and a former client serves on the board of directors along with community leaders from many different fields. Always struggling for funding, support comes from a patchwork of sources: the City of Berkeley, BOSS, foundation grants, and donations from individuals, churches, and local businesses.

I DIDN'T INTEND TO STAY

My interest in photography and the possibility of documenting the Center brought me there as a volunteer, but I didn't intend to stay. I told myself I was too busy, but I think I was afraid of being different, of being an outsider to the other women, and it made me feel a little shy. I was concerned about invading privacy, and at first I put my camera away. One morning, I asked a woman, "Would it be all right, would you mind, do you think I could take your photograph?"

She said simply, "I'd be pleased." Before long, the women had taught me that differences in that community soon fall away, that newcomers become friends, and that inside the camera for a moment we could be as one. Nearly two years later I'm still there. And for nearly two years, we have been covering the walls with photographs, and behind the lens, my women friends are still so close to me, so focused, so beautiful, that it still takes my breath away.

Zelma Brown, who is herself a survivor of homelessness, is a poet and artist, as well as a volunteer. One day she tacked a poem called "My Sister, My Sister," (*Street Spirit,* April, 1997) to the living room wall. To me, that poem was about the photographs, and when she showed me other poems, our writing and photography seemed intertwined. Zelma says, "I interpret from the women's pictures and from their eyes and souls, and put it into poetry." I read her poetry and put it into photographs. Together we are talking about strength, and dignity, and grace.

IN YOUR SHOES I WALK

by Zelma Brown

Sista I walk in your shoes, I walk in your shoes sista, in the morning I dress and put on your shoes sista.

I step into the street and deal with the world in your shoes sista, in your shoes.

I smile at strangers who don't want to meet my eyes, and when I cry my tears fall on your shoes sista, on your shoes.

And after the day is done I return home, and begin to remove your shoes from my feet, and after I remove each pair of flats, pumps, tennis shoes, work boots, and slippers I rub my feet and go to sleep and see you all around me sista.



I AM A WOMAN

by Zelma Brown

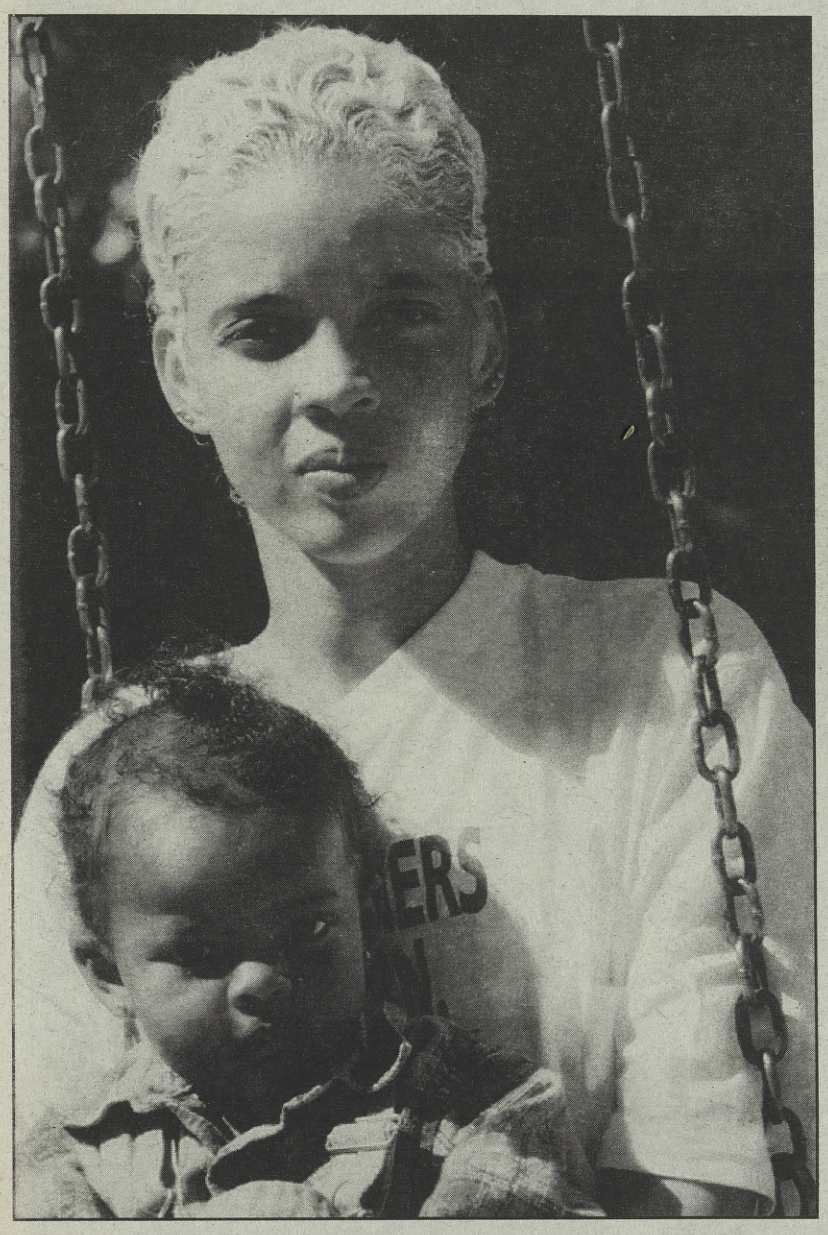
I am a woman
strong and tall
I don't bend with the
storms or bow down to rain.

My roots stretch back
to the beginning of time
and my story is told with
every sunrise.

I am a woman
whose future is unknown
I'm as constant as the wind
and calm like the night skies.

And all things change
and all things move on
but still

I am a woman
who stands, strong and tall.





THROUGH MY EYES

by Zelma Brown

Through my eyes
my world is, blue
wets, green drys,
and gray skies.
sleeping castles that reach up high
slowly I grab myself awake.
inhale deeply and breathe in the wasted
life that lay at my feet. don't want to
be touched can't handle it, will give
myself to the next blank face.
when my brown eyes gaze back through the
metal screen I see emptiness and hurt
through my brown eyes
blue wets, green drys, gray skies.

HARD STEPPIN

by Zelma Brown

Hard steppin got to move
got to keep on movin,
hard steppin, walkin, travelin
got to move, keepin my head up,
keepin my head up, hard steppin
got to move stay strong, stay strong
hard steppin so tired got to move,
keepin strong, keepin my head up,
hard steppin.



MEDALS

by Zelma Brown

I belong to the U.S.A. SURVIVORS GUILD.
I received two gold medals for
surviving my childhood.
I've also won plaques for
teen suicide and teen pregnancy.

I've come in second in the depression category,
but I'll be competing in that race again I'm sure.
I have won ribbons for good sportsmanship
When it came to drugs and alcohol.

Let's not forget the numerous certificates
For issues like controlling,
obsessive and codependent
behavior.

But the one I am most proud of is
I came in last place for
most likely to quit.

The struggle **to survive can be an arduous journey for homeless women. The woman pictured at left died of AIDS in mid-July, yet her smile radiates a steadfast hope.**



IS IT TOO LATE?

by Zelma Brown

Tell me is it too late? Can I change
my smile, my life?
Can I go back and redo all my mistakes?
Is it too late?
can I change my fate and count my steps
carefully?
Can I change my walk to carry me elsewhere
Is it too late?
Tell me, can I take back all the things I've said?
My lies, my deceit, my defeats?
Is it too late?
Can I change my beginning and
learn my innocence?
Can I live without fear, can I?

REFLECTIONS

by Zelma Brown

Sometimes I see her when I pass by a window
and she's smiling, she still looks the same as
she always does, she appears to be a woman of
confidence and strength, she's always on the go,
I wish I had her self assurance.

Sometimes I see her when I pass a puddle, and
she's smiling, she still looks the same as
she always does, her head is held up high, and
she knows where she's going,
I wish I had her resolve.

Sometimes I see her when I drink from a clear
glass, she still looks the same as
she always does, her face is filled with hope and
life with hints of laughter and happiness,
I wish I possessed her joy.

Sometimes I see her when I pass a mirror and
she's smiling, she still looks the same as
she always does.



SECRETS

by Zelma Brown

Sometimes they whisper secrets in my head,
the voice is that of a child, afraid.
Tears I feel forming at the tip of my eyes
leave me still and quiet.
Sometimes they yell secrets in my head,
the voice is that of an adult, angry.
That's when I feel out of control, and my
sanity is on the edge of breaking.
Sometimes they cry secrets in my head,
and the voices are of many that dwell within
me. I feel confused and somewhat lost,
not knowing which way I should turn.
Sometimes they whisper secrets in my head.

IMAGE AND IMAGINATION

ARTISTS REFLECT ON THE HUMAN FACE OF POVERTY



Dorothea Lange's unforgettable image of a mother and chilld weathering the hardships of the Dust Bowl era. Dorothea Lange photo

Copyright the Dorothea Lange Collection, The Oakland Museum of California, The City of Oakland. Gift of Paul S. Taylor.

THE NEW OKIES

MEXICAN FARMWORKERS ARE PERSECUTED TODAY AS THE EARLIER OKIES WERE PERSECUTED: FOR THEIR POVERTY. THEY ARE PERSECUTED, AS MY FATHER WAS, FOR THEIR INABILITY TO PASS MUSTER, FOR THE DIFFERENCE OF THEIR CULTURE.

by Clifton Ross

"Son, them people gonna treat you worse than an animal if they find out you're from Oklahoma," my father said. It was spring, 1976, and I was preparing to leave for Berkeley, California. My father was giving me his final advice to prepare me for what was to come, but even then I knew he was wrong. Something as simple as a linguistic nuance, an accent, would make the difference between his universal rejection and my easy acceptance in the culture of California. But I've never been able to forget that last morning we spent before I left Oklahoma, like thousands before me, to make the long trek to California.

Not that he was wrong in his analysis. It was, after all, his experience to be treated, as he put it, "worse than an animal;" to be called a "redneck" because of a sunburned neck from stooping at field work all day; to be rejected not on the basis of character, but on characterization, on the basis of geographical and cultural origin.

It was Charles Peguy who said that all crimes, no matter how heinous, are forgivable save the crime of being poor, and the Okies embodied that poverty in this country in the thirties. They were the unforgivable poor, those guilty of the greatest crime of not having stolen and gained wealth, of not having cheated and lied and embezzled for wealth. That, in a society whose values are based exclusively on wealth, status and power, is truly the only unforgivable crime.

I remember my father's face as he told me about his treatment in California, an experience so painful that he has never been out to visit me in the 20 years I've lived here. I remember my father as I meet with friends who treat me with such respect and I wonder: Would it be different if I sounded like my father? Are educated, intelligent, even intellectual, people really that ignorant?

The Okies and Mexicans have arrived in successive migrations in California to do the stoop work in the fields of the great Central Valley. But to the growers the people themselves are of little importance. The hand reaching to clip the grapes from the vine or twist the peach from the tree is to them only a hand. In the '40s, the Mexican workers imported for seasonal work were known as "braceros," a word derived from the Spanish word "brazo" or "arm," and the rest were included in the category of "field hands." In few other industries but this one most essential for human survival, that of cultivating and harvesting food, were workers so exploited and abused. I think of that as I watch bill after initiative after law pass, criminalizing Mexican laborers too poor or powerless to obtain documents to become "legal." They are the new Okies, persecuted, as my father was, for their inability to pass muster; like the Okie, for their inability to speak "proper" English — or inability to speak it at all; for the color of their skin, characteristic as the red neck of the

See **The New Okies** *page nine*



Migrant farmworkers harvested grapes — and poverty. Dorothea Lange photo

photo courtesy of the Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley/Richard Ogar



***Girl on Truck*, San Joaquin Valley.** Dorothea Lange photo

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IMAGE AND IMAGINATION

The art showcased here is from a performance organized by Ben Clarke at the Oakland Library and Oakland Museum. Artists reflected on Dorothea Lange's classic photographic images of migrant workers and homeless refugees, then created poetry, stories, and music to portray the human face of poverty, from the Dust Bowl migrants of the Depression to homeless people on Oakland's streets in the 1990s. *Image and Imagination*, an anthology edited by Clarke, is available for $15.95 ($1.50 postage) from RSBR, 1842 Foothill Blvd., Oakland, CA 94606.

Lange Speaks

by Rhett Stuart

The workshopbookperformancelife.
Six Saturday workshop of writer impressions off
Dorothea Lange's Thirties photography performed
the James Moore Auditorium of Oakland Museum,
Lange's pictures flashed the large screen.
Each writer on podium stage-right or left,
voices poems off the images.
Margot brings her second grade,
having drawn the photos,
written of them in Spanish, in English.
A. K. Black raps. Abena Songbird chants Indian electricity.
Matt Calahan sings out essences of his work experience.
Ben Clarke flutes off Muhammad Al-min's piano jazz.
Our words so ready, museum people so professional.
Of the beautiful persons I wrote beside,
to Wanda I say, "Now we can live the memory"
instead of it seeming most memorable after passing,
one of the saddest things in life.

Lange rises from sleep and praises us with gratitude.
Our thanks for her gift of our language alive as the pictures.

Ben had branched out and, as Kitty said,
"took us all along with him."
I quote her and he says, "That's the idea, isn't it?"
By now we all have a rich history together.
The book is in the stores.
The performances repeat retrospected in action where
the pictures move, move us,

move Dorothea like before and she tells us,

"You can make the pictures live to better same inhumane
traumas today off Scott Braley's and Ken Miller's camera.
And thanks for the job.
My job on yours makes one sterling team
on this one world for all.
I'm happy I did not die."

THE NEW OKIES

THESE GIRLS ARE TWO SIDES OF THE FACE OF A DESPISED DEITY, THE QUINTESSENTIALLY HUMAN FACE OF THE UNDERCLASS, THE EXPLOITED, SO FULL OF PAIN AND JOY. EACH IN HER OWN WAY SAYS, "I AM HERE. I EXIST. I WILL NOT BE NEGATED." EACH FACE RADIATES AN AUTHENTICATION THAT REVEALS, FOR ALL TIME AND TO ALL GENERATIONS, THE BLOOD AND SPIRIT THAT UNITE THEM.

Okie; for their lack of "proper" education; for the difference of their culture. In every respect and for the very same reasons, they are now persecuted as the earlier Okies were persecuted: for their poverty.

She has a smear of grease
on the breast of her white, white blouse.
Her eyes are hidden behind shadows
but beneath them is the bright smile
of a scholar.

(For Dorothea Lange's photo, *Girl on Truck*, San Joaquin Valley)

Six years later, in 1982, I passed through Oklahoma with a one-way ticket to Nicaragua in my pocket. There were constant rumors of a U.S. invasion of that country and I was determined to do what I could to fight it or at least to bear witness to what I saw. My father was a retired Air Force master sergeant, having joined the military, like many others, desperately seeking a way out of poverty. I had intended to spend some quality time with my parents to say good-bye since I wasn't sure when, or if, I'd be returning. As it turned out, my father and I spent most of the time arguing so violently that we finally had to take our discussions out of the house at my mother's behest.

We walked down to the lower forty acres, through an enormous field of clover and then passed into the pasture of love grass without speaking, but the silence was peaceful. My father pointed out the new calf, shyly hiding in the shade of his mother, drinking from the pond where I used to fish and swim. Suddenly my father turned to me with a look of terrible confusion on his face. "Son, what do them people mean to you?" he asked, obviously referring to Latin Americans.

I thought for a moment and replied, probably for the first time since I'd arrived, in a calm voice. "Don't you see dad, they're the new Okies." I saw a flicker of recognition in his eyes, or at least I thought I did. Whatever occurred in my father in that moment, I recognized it as a turning point in our relationship. I had suddenly become aware of the profound connection of our dramatically different lives, the continuity of our history despite all appearances and political loyalties.

I was reminded of that moment in the fields with my father once again when I was in Chiapas, Mexico, 15 years later, on New Year's Day, 1997. I was visiting the Zapatista community of La Realidad in the depths of the Lacandon jungle. The jungle with all its brilliantly verdant diversity was as foreign to me as the Mayan language I heard all around me. Yet there was something oddly familiar about everything I saw. Not surprisingly, in La Realidad there was the same enthusiasm, dedication, warmth and generosity that characterized the Sandinista Revolution of Nicaragua at its best, only here on a much smaller scale and in a much poorer state.

What did surprise me was the degree to which La Realidad in particular and the whole state of Chiapas in general reminded me of Oklahoma. The old shacks with faded and peeling paint, loose planks sprung from the walls, dirt floors and dark bare interiors all brought me back to Simpson, a little southern Oklahoma town I'd visited once with my father, near where he'd grown up. The people of La Realidad, like the people of that rural Oklahoma community, were the same plain folk of few words, characterized by the silence you could mistake either for dumb ignorance or profound, silent wisdom, or both. Like the kids I'd seen playing in the yards of Simpson, here the children were clothed in near-rags as they played with imagined toys since their parents were too poor to buy them real ones. In both cases these were people on the margins of modern life, written out of history and the development plans made in government offices, and barely surviving in little communities not found on even the most detailed maps.

Max, the unofficial mayor of the community, was constantly running errands or carrying out some duty as "encargo" of the community under the maxim, "to rule obeying." In the shade of a makeshift cafe on my second day in La Realidad he took a few minutes to talk. Eventually, the conversation came around to the rebellious faith that united us: he, a dark-skinned Mexican of mixed race and I, a light-skinned North American, also of mixed race. He talked about arriving in the Lacandon jungles nearly two decades before, of the origins and development of the Zapatistas as they struggled to gain dignity, land and a living wage for their work. When they continued to be ignored, their struggle eventually took on the character of a rebellion, bringing them international attention. I listened intently as I sipped my warm Coca Cola in the heat of the day. Then I told him about my own ancestors entering Oklahoma by the Trail of Tears and the land rush, and of the many who left the state in the Dust Bowl by the trail of travail that led to California. I mentioned the Green Corn Rebellion and the enormous working-class movement in Oklahoma earlier this century and then went on to lament its demise as the state became one of the most conservative in the U.S. Max listened and his dark eyes revealed a profound comprehension.

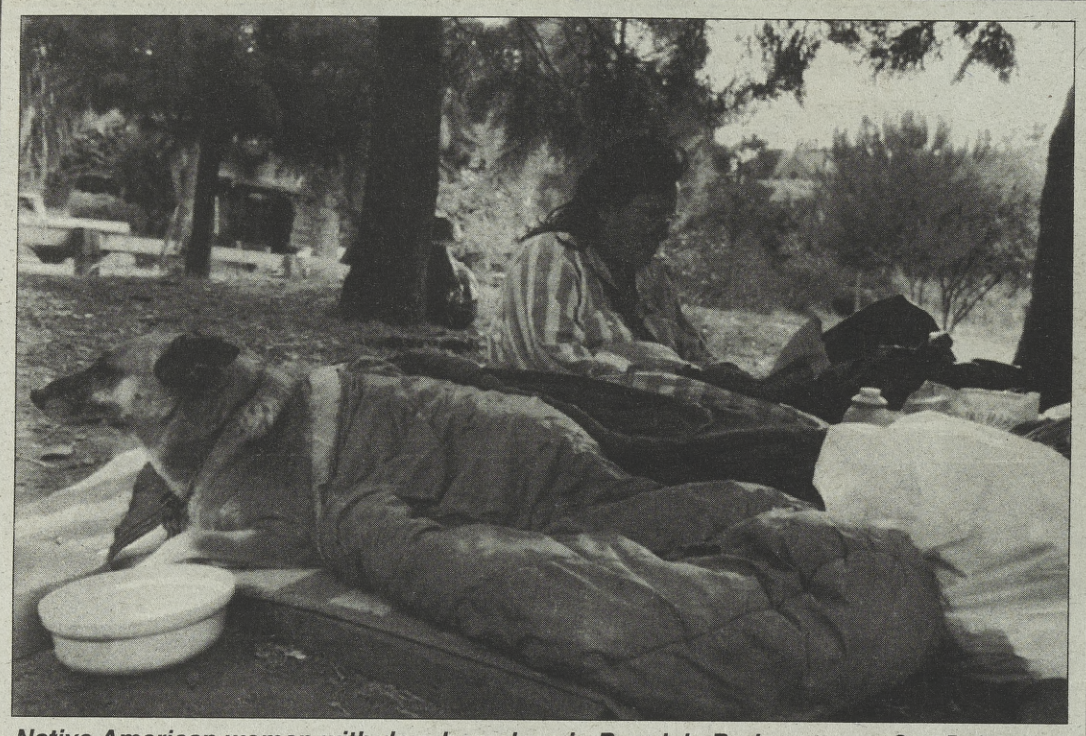
When I finished speaking I listened to his silence, as deep as the words he was about to utter. In a voice that was even and flat as a prairie, Max said, "The skin may be brown or white but the blood and the spirit beneath are the same."

As I look over the photos of Dorothea Lange, I'm naturally most drawn to the faces of the field workers from Oklahoma and Mexico. She, too, saw the deep connection between the poor Anglo Americans and Latin Americans, united in their exploitation, one in their rebellion. As I study the photos, two images in particular stand out for me. The young girl in the serape standing beside the milpa, and the young Okie girl, are strikingly different. The face of the Mexican is so dark and brooding, that of a diminutive madonna, angelic and anguished. The face of the Okie girl, by contrast, is bright white with a painful smirk on her lips. In these two images is the stark contrast between the twin worlds of Chiapas and Oklahoma, two states that are nowhere and whose people are non-existent.

Like yin and yang, these girls are two sides of the face of a despised deity, the quintessentially human face of the underclass, the exploited, so full of pain and joy, plunged into a debasement that attains a strange transcendence. Each in her own way says, "I am here. I exist. I will not be negated." Each face radiates an authentication that reveals, for all time and to all generations, the blood and spirit that unite them.

IMAGE AND IMAGINATION

ARTISTS REFLECT ON THE HUMAN FACE OF POVERTY



Native American woman with dog, homeless in People's Park. Scott Braley photo

Brothas and Bars (500 years to Life)

by (Sandra) Abena Songbird

Bars on the windows
bars on the windows
bars on the windows
bars on my eyelids
bars on my eyelids
sealed shut
vacuum packed

cooped, cooped
caged bird
caged tiger
caged bird
caged tiger
No, don't never
no, can't, won't
No, don't never
no, no, no

Brothas and Bars
tumbling
one falls, we all fall
soon I'll be stooped
like the brotha in front
all in a row
sealed shut
vacuum packed
must keep my eyes open
round men
in square holes
just like the ships that brought us here
caged and chained
ankle to ankle
No, don't never
no, can't, won't
No, don't never
no, no, no

Can't cage my dreams
can't be steeled up or sealed up
can't trap my spirit
I'll ride the light ray
that just touched my cheek
I'll ride the sunbeam
right on out
right on out…



***Walking Wounded,* Oakland, California.** Dorothea Lange photo

© the Dorothea Lange Collection, Oakland Museum of California, City of Oakland. Gift of Paul S. Taylor.

Walking Wounded

Based on Dorothea Lange's "Walking Wounded In Oakland"

by Robert Derbin

Image of the "Walking Wounded In Oakland," 1954.
1924.
1974.
1994, today.
Interchangeable crutches, years,
Automobiles,
Wheelchairs.
Picture this century.
What comes to mind when you think
20th Century?
War destruction untold damage and inhumanity?
I first flash back to Detroit 1968
Helping my amputee mother
Walk her first steps.
The family said don't even try.
Pain gave way to agony
And so her last leg gave away
Her hip disintegrated.
She never got out of bed again.
How I wish she might have been one of the walking wounded
How her family might have survived.

Who Owes Whom

And what if we interrupted
the blue phosphorescent faces
that calmly assess our fate?

What if we stripped the presses of
their convenient projections,
voicing instead our own objections
to the Mexican debt:

We cannot pay
because our cobble-stone streets,
flanked by the twice repossessed
temples to our future,
appear now like war zones:
bombed out,
abandoned like the dreams
hunger consumes.

We cannot pay
because malnutrition is engraved
in the ancient faces
of our children;
carved into the knotted driftwood
backs of our campesinos
who must relinquish our food
to the world's table.



Art by Diego Azura, Second Grade
Thousand Oaks Elementary School, Berkeley
Diego's painting was inspired by Dorothea Lange's photo of a poor child in cornfields where her family worked.

We will not pay the debt
because half our wealth
is hoarded by hands
as clean and white
as the teeth of bankers,
las guardias blancas,
la Casa Blanca,
though the skin at times may look brown.

We will not pay one increment more
than the blood and tears
shed like ticker-tape
in the miscarried revolutions
creditors aborted.

For how are we to repay a debt that is owed us?

All that land ripped like flesh
from the ribs of our hungry.

All that land pried from the fingers of our dead
like artifacts to be sold to private collectors.

All that land on which we die
like ants in a poison rain when we till it;
like cockroaches when we trespass.

All that land all that blood all that sweat.

How are we to repay a debt owed us?

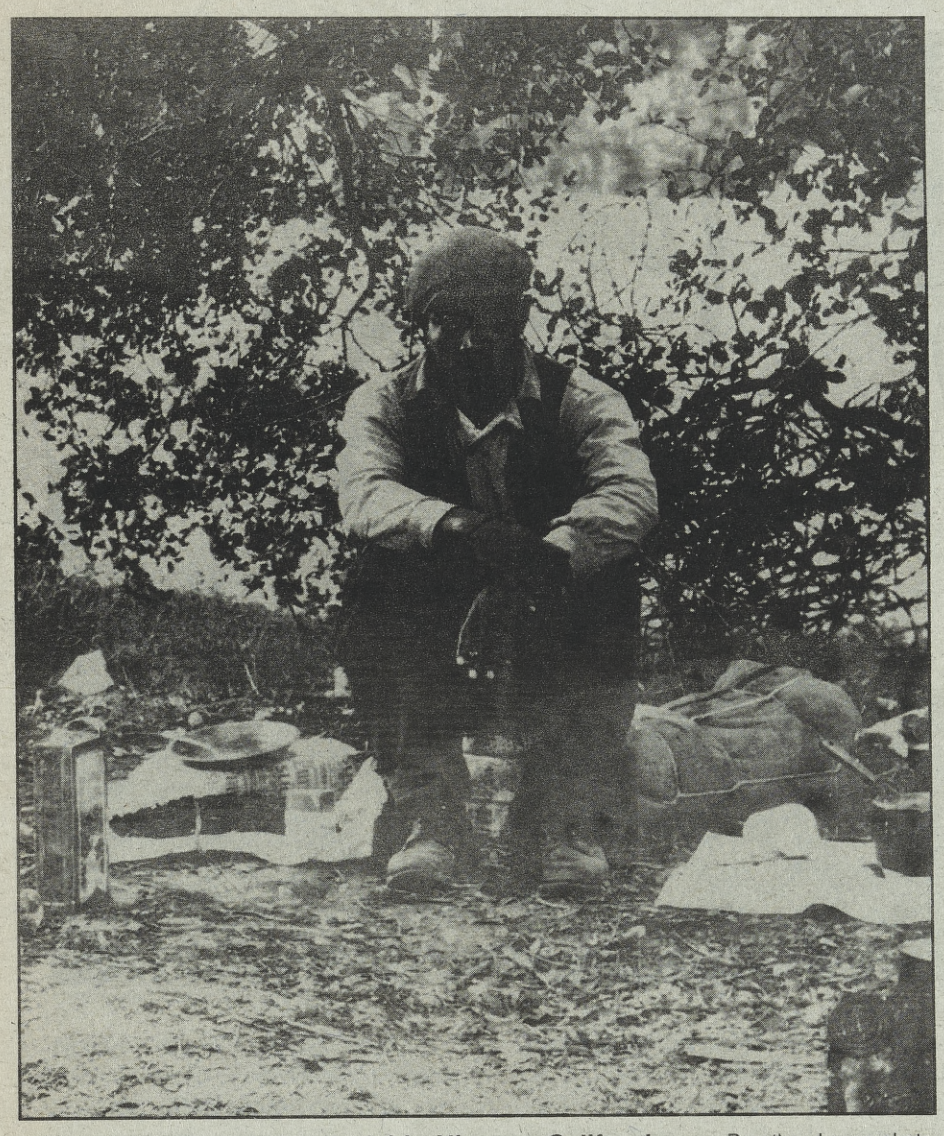
IMAGE AND IMAGINATION

Performance & Book Party

September 13, 1997
Saturday, 2 p.m.
West Oakland Public Library
1801 Adeline St., Oakland

Writer-editor Ben Clarke and guest artists A.K. Black, Maketa Groves, Richard Oyama, Margot Pepper, Abena Songbird, and others present works inspired by the photography of Dorothea Lange. The artists explore Lange's images of homelessness, immigration, forced relocation, criminal justice, family and community. The performance celebrates the release of *IMAGE AND IMAGINATION: Encounters with the photography of Dorothea Lange,* a book of creative writing featuring 50 photos by the world-renowned photographer.

Lange's photographs, children's art and poetry inspired by her, and essays and poems written during Clarke's residency at the Oakland Museum and Library will be on display at the Oakland Main Library, 125 14th St., Oakland, August 15 to Sept. 15, 1997.



***Camp of single man by roadside,* Nipomo, California.** Dorothea Lange photo
photo courtesy of the Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley/Richard Ogar



Woman by side of road, Redding, California. Dorothea Lange photo
"Slept in a bed all my life long, till now — sleeping on the ground."
photo courtesy of the Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley/Richard Ogar

Flight

Based on Lange's "Girls in Soquel Creek"
by Anna Mae Stanley

It was then that I walked on water,
I spoke in tongues.
I had no poverty.
I had no bruised body.
I had no sun-drained mother.
That day my mother's laughter gurgled
as cool water entering clouds.

We had each other.
We had the water.
We had the pure music of air on leaf
of leaf on air
of earth cupping water as if
the earth were an enormous hand
strong enough to hold everything.

I was six.
I stood naked upon that huge hand —
that earth surrounding the creek,
felt its pulse, its strength, its heat
and believed everything in my life
could change.

My arms spread half wing.
I close my eyes.
Watch,
I rise.

There's a War Goin' On

A.K. Black

Yo' there's a war goin' on before the day I was born
my identity torn from my biological form
perpetrated on — word is bond — ready for the war, they won the battle
now I'm strollin' through the valley of the shadow of death

mic check what I etch-a-sketch
back in the days of slavery we used to step and fetch
a different type of species injestin' pig intestines and their feces
so those that corroded the seven seas could write their thesis the way he sees

no sense in wastin' space in this nation's constitution
put down them niggas made no contribution
dismiss my history as if this be irrelevant
while the system be consistently arrestin' my development

the prison system's just another form of public housin'
one telephone alone brings home one hundred fifty-thousand
burnt copper tone, ghetto prone to the bone, no space I own
this place I call my home's in an experimental zone
'cause there's a war goin' on…

Yo' there's a war goin' on and we be sick of the bullshit
they diseased the seven seas and came at me from the pulpit
won the trust of the indigenous, told us our religion must change
then started droppin' that pidgeon stuff

they rounded us up, seized and then seasoned us
Nina, Pinta, Santa Maria, and the Jesus was the bus
what a rough ride only to be greeted by homicide
dehumanized, demoralized, and then de-religified

and then they tried playin' scrimmage with the image
of the indigenous man that made the original pilgrimage
that's why I opt to stop the opposition, thought I wasn't?
tried droppin' proposition 187 on my cuzins

and now they wants to pursue the Women of the Bamboo
and do me and my crew like Mumia Abu-Jamal
and make us all fall behind prison walls
y'all best believe and take heed to this final call
'cause there's a war goin' on…



***Damaged child,* Shacktown, Oklahoma.** Dorothea Lange photo
Copyright the Dorothea Lange Collection, Oakland Museum of California. City of Oakland. Gift of Paul S. Taylor.

Stare

Based on Lange's "Damaged Child"
by Anna Mae Stanley

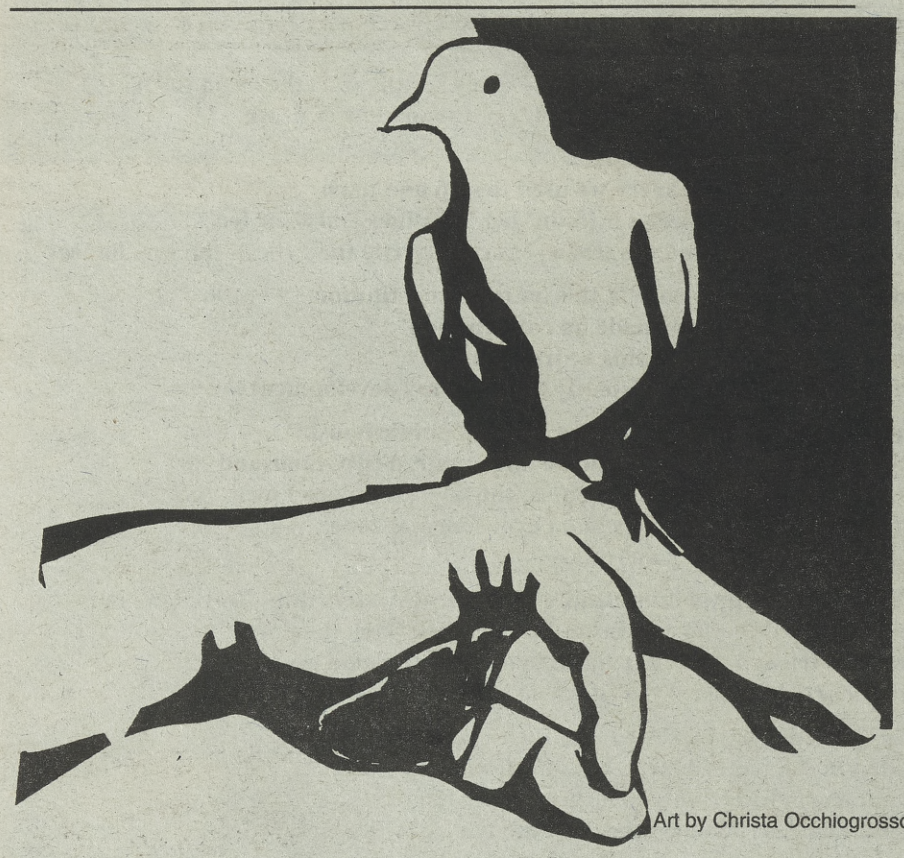
My eyes disappearing into their
swollen holes
are the bridge you cross
to get to a town
where everything is hunger,
everything is thirst.

Here the sky unblooms in heat
above earth that rises up toward you
its scratchy ropes of dust
as shack house boards creak:
All is hunger. All is thirst.

The dust weaves its spined fibers
into your clothes,
into the cells of
your skin,
into your
voice
until you are as dry as the air itself
until you thirst as my mother thirsts
when she beats me
punching my eyes in
until they cave back in
until they again become
only the bridge to a town
of scabby shacks,
a town of
hunger and thirst
I stand before
a bruise blurring
a shacktown girl
every child you look away from
looking through you
knowing you will blink,
knowing you will cross back over.

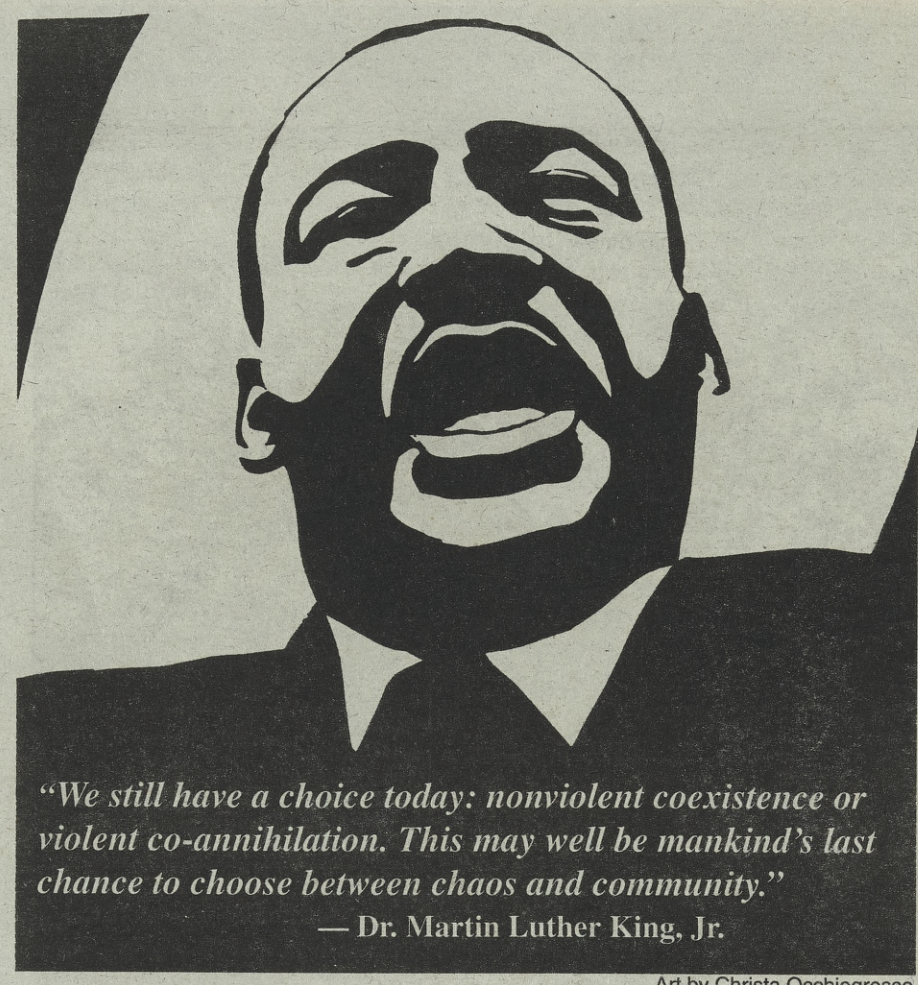
Homes or Holocaust Weapons?

from page one



Art by Christa Occhiogrosso

People must take action through nonviolent protest to demand that Congress slash military spending and fund human needs.



Art by Christa Occhiogrosso

The National Ignition Facility

"The world is still a dangerous place. We must retain the power to deter nations, with strategic nuclear forces, from acting against our own vital interests... The National Ignition Facility [NIF] will help us to retain that power without having to employ nuclear testing." — Secretary of Energy Federico Peña, at NIF groundbreaking ceremony, Livermore Lab, May 29, 1997

The Lawrence Livermore Laboratory is one of three national laboratories, with *Los Alamos in New Mexico and Sandia* with branches in New Mexico and California, where all U.S. nuclear weapons are designed. Livermore Lab is just 35 miles from downtown Oakland, an impoverished city struggling to fill its empty storefronts, where thousands of homeless and elderly poor street people panhandle for their next meal.

At Livermore, building began earlier this summer of the National Ignition Facility (NIF), a stadium-sized laser installation to create and contain miniature thermonuclear explosions, primarily for weapons research. With a construction cost of $1.2 billion, and a lifetime cost of $4.7 billion, the NIF is the largest military project ever undertaken at Livermore. It is also the most expensive element of the Department of Energy's vast Stockpile Stewardship and Management Program to maintain nuclear weapons research, development, testing and manufacturing capabilities well into the next century, with or without underground testing.

Last September, President Bill Clinton signed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, pledging to end nuclear explosions. *But over the next decade, the U.S. plans to invest over $40 billion in Stockpile Stewardship* — more, in constant dollars, than the DOE's Cold War annual spending average for nuclear weapons research, development, testing, production and disassembly (directly comparable activities). *That's why people risked arrest at Livermore Lab on August 6!*

Nuclear Weapons — What Are They Good For?

"Nuclear weapons are the 'big stick' that defends our homeland and are the ultimate deterrent force against any potential aggressor." — Sigfried S. Hecker, Director, Los Alamos National Laboratory, testimony to the U.S. Senate, March 19, 1997

In 1945, there were two nuclear weapons in the world. The United States used them to demolish the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, incinerating at least 200,000 people — mostly innocent civilians. After the war, there was a short-lived attempt to place nuclear weapons under international control in order to avoid an arms race of unprecedented global danger. Instead, the U.S. and the Soviet Union got caught up in that arms race, becoming obsessed with each other's ability to strike first. For nearly 40 years, the world escaped the threat of "mutually assured destruction."

In the 1950s and '60s, Britain, France, and China officially joined the nuclear club, and several other countries developed secret nuclear weapons programs. By 1986, there were nearly 70,000 nuclear weapons in the world. The American people were told that our "national security" depended on nuclear weapons, that our threats to use our nuclear weapons against our adversaries would deter them from using their nuclear weapons against us.

However, retired Air Force General Lee Butler, who was in charge of U.S. nuclear forces until just three years ago, says we were lucky to escape a nuclear exchange. The world survived the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, according to General Butler, "no thanks to deterrence, but only by the grace of God."

Today, the United States remains firmly committed to nuclear weapons as central instruments of national policy. Instead of seizing upon the end of the Cold War as an opportunity to rid the world of nuclear weapons, the U.S. used it as an excuse to develop new nuclear policies and weapons concepts. The nuclear-weapon states are putting new emphasis on the use of nuclear weapons to "deter" possible chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons threats from "rogue" states or terrorist groups anywhere in the world. In fact, these vague "threats" are being used to bolster old fears about our "national security" and thus to help maintain overall military spending at Cold War levels.

Who Pays the Price?

"Over the bleached bones and jumbled residues of numerous civilizations are written the pathetic words: 'Too late.' We still have a choice today: nonviolent coexistence or violent co-annihilation. This may well be mankind's last chance to choose between chaos and community."

— Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

When Ronald Reagan became President in 1980, this country had over 24,000 nuclear weapons — a result of the arms race with the Soviet Union. The government already had large contracts with private corporations to build nuclear weapons, starting in the late 1940s. Nevertheless, Reagan began shifting money from social programs to the military with the support of Republicans and Democrats alike, a trend that continues to this day. Warning of the "evil empire" and international terrorism, Reagan invoked U.S. "national interests" to support a military build-up. Reagan and his henchmen justified increased defense spending by claiming that our nuclear weapons were necessary to prevent the spread of both communism and nuclear weapons to Third World countries.

The nuclear arms race escalated under Reagan, and billions of dollars were wasted on the ill-conceived "Star Wars" missile defense program. From 1980 to 1986, the Pentagon's budget doubled, from $140.7 billion to $281.4 billion. The largest peacetime expansion of the military in U.S. history was justified as preparing for the possibility of a war with the Soviet Union, even though the Soviet Union and its military were beginning to unravel at the same time.

Simultaneously, Reagan presided over the most dramatic increase in homelessness this country had seen since the Great Depression. During the Reagan years, federal tax policies also were changed to provide massive tax breaks for the wealthiest Americans and biggest corporations.

Between 1976 and 1993, the share of the wealth owned by the top 10% of the population increased from 50% to 69%, while the share held by the other 90% decreased from 50% to 31%.

Moreover, by taking billions of dollars from the Treasury, the tax breaks helped cause a massive increase in the deficit, which in turn, created pressure to reduce federal spending. The cuts have come mainly from social programs. Decreases in job-training programs and job creation, loss of affordable housing, escalating health-care costs, and deteriorating public education have hit cities, particularly working class and poor neighborhoods, especially hard. Over the past decade, military spending has averaged about 60% of federal expenditures each year, compared to only 12% for social programs.

The Star Wars fiasco and the recent funding of the National Ignition Facility at Livermore are good examples of money being diverted from social services to the military. Implementation of the "Contract on America," which led to Congress passing the "Personal Responsibility Act" and severely reducing welfare programs, is another example of how funds for social service programs have been slashed.

Even though welfare accounts for only 2% of the federal budget, Republicans have made a big effort to mislead the public into thinking that welfare and Medicare spending are the reasons they can't balance the budget. American people, especially poor people and people of color: "Wake up!" Don't be fooled by this nonsense from Congress. It simply is NOT TRUE, because over the past 40 years, the military budget has accounted for more than half of all federal spending.

Why does defense spending remain at Cold War levels? Why does federal aid to cities continue to decrease? Why do 10% of the people own 70% of the wealth? Why do corporations continue to receive huge tax breaks while unemployment remains high, especially in low-income communities?

People should ask these questions of their elected leaders. And they should demand answers. We must read between the lines and not be misled by politicians who have refused to cut back military spending. The excessive allocation of money to the military is the main reason why Congress can't balance the budget. People must take action through nonviolent protest to demand that Congress slash military spending and fund human needs.

Welfare Cuts vs. Military Spending

"To the extent that we're engaging in deficit reduction this year, we're doing it on the backs of the poor." — Robert D. Reischauer, Director of the Congressional Budget Office 1989-1995, in 1996

Politicians continue to imply that people on welfare and Medicare are causing federal budget deficiencies each year. But since World War II we have wasted vast amounts of money on the military — money that could have been used to create jobs and wipe out poverty in this country.

Recently, Clinton and the Congress drastically changed the welfare system by passing the "Personal Responsibility Act." The Act shifted federal money and control of the welfare system back to the states. The new law requires nearly two million poor people now on welfare to find work within the next five years. Nearly 100,000 children suffering from disabilities including asthma and dyslexia will no longer

See **Housing or Holocaust** *page 11*

Santa Cruz Activists Fight Sleeping Ban

from page two

noses of the landlords.

The California Homeless Civil Rights Action Network's alert system has been used to support protests in Palo Alto, San Jose, Mountain View, and Santa Barbara against Sit/Lie laws; protests in Santa Cruz and Glendale against Sleeping Bans; a Los Angeles fight against a panhandling law; a Santa Monica crusade to reopen showers for the homeless; and support for a Buena Park Baptist convicted of housing the homeless in his church. Fair Share Network coordinator Sandy Brown links current welfare cuts, the struggles of poor women, and the right to sleep at night.

Homeless United for Friendship & Freedom organizers are discussing a daytime sleep-out at the County courthouse to challenge Judge Kelly's recent ruling that the nighttime Sleeping Ban is constitutional because "homeless people can sleep during the day." Linda Lemaster's Housing Now! in Santa Cruz has already announced support for such a sleep-out.

Hardened veterans of the struggle against the Sleeping Ban have turned to a fifth path: organizing to get the City's law on the November, 1998 ballot through the initiative process. Citizens Committee for the Homeless secretary Becky Johnson, California Homeless Civil Rights Action Network point person Laura Tucker, Green Party activist David Silva, and community watchdog Bob Lamonica are spearheading the effort to get 5000 signatures from registered voters in the City.

In three weeks last September, The Revolutionary Coalition gathered 1800 petitions against the entire Camping Ban, of which the Sleeping Ban is a subsection. At the next City Council meeting, police sent Silva flying through the chamber doors into a marble pillar as he tried to present those petitions to the city clerk in the midst of the Chaingang protest.

This latest initiative effort will also target the ban on bedding, which prohibits covering up with blankets after 11 p.m. on public property in the city. Organizers are trying to fashion as broad-based an initiative effort as possible, while retaining a clear dedication to the basic moral principle that sleep is not an economic privilege but a fundamental human right.

Ironically, the sixth path to protest is intensified anti-homeless laws and practices pushed by the Santa Cruz potentates. Being homeless and under the age of 16 becomes a crime after 11 p.m. throughout Santa Cruz County in early September when the teen curfew removes the City of Santa Cruz as a sanctuary for the young. Police pressure is up downtown with daily harassment for sitting on the sidewalk or planters, leaning against lampposts, or simply gathering publicly.

City workers are removing public benches at the behest of businesses. Police routinely harass street musicians. The Downtown Business Association is threatening to intensify its blatantly bogus "give to charities not sparechangers" program with a more militant "Phase 2," concocted behind closed doors. Young workers who linger on the street after leaving their late-night jobs are being targeted. Repression may spark rebellion.

Santa Cruz's only local emergency shelter provider, the Interfaith Satellite Shelter Program, candidly admits it regularly turns away people, leaving them without any legal place to sleep. Welfare cuts are striking bone. Santa Cruz County and neighboring cities are escalating complementary criminalizations of the homeless. In Santa Cruz, shelter is provided for fewer than 5% of the homeless population, and nothing has been done to alleviate the welfare decapitation crisis.

Statewide, Gov. Pete Wilson has vetoed critical funds for winter use of National Guard Armories for emergency shelter. With all these forces in play, Santa Cruz's long struggle for homeless justice may bark loudly enough to awaken the slumbering politicians before the lethal bite of an El Nino winter puts some of the homeless to sleep permanently.

Loaves & Fishes

from page two

here, you feel so dirty, the only way to get any relief from that shame and that horrible feeling is to take a shower. Then at least you have that." Chatfield says, "One of the things our critics say is, 'Homeless people are dirty,' but at the same time are putting us in a position where we are forced to close the showers. The city spent $280,000 on that fence at Muir Park. If they had put that towards services for poor people..."

Chatfield hopes that the long-term benefits of an August closing will outweigh the short-term price. "In the long term, the guests will benefit," he said. "It's like other things in life. If you look at just today and tomorrow, it looks pretty bleak, but if you look out a little bit, it's not as bad as it seems. I have never in my lifetime been so confident of what I just said."

Chatfield is hoping for a better Christmas donation season this year, to make up for the losses suffered during the lawsuit last season. Christmas donations will be put into an operating reserve fund to get through the slower summer season. "Without a positive giving season, we will have to make some hard decisions about cutting back services," he says.

Redevelopment plans have caused much of the spotlight on the industrial district where Loaves and Fishes is located. "The poor people have to be moved out," says Chatfield. When asked if they will move, he says, "The only way that's going to happen is over the dead body of Loaves and Fishes. We plan to improve the space that we have."

One term of the settlement calls for the formation of a task force to mediate future disagreements in helping the area's poor. "I just want to make sure that the members of this task force have the stature and prominence to make it work," Chatfield said. "It needs to have bishops, heads of corporations, and top political leaders." He believes that a petty approach is not the answer: "Our vision of a task force is where the entire Sacramento community comes together and deals with the issues." Representing an institution which is named for growth according to need, he says, "Let's not destroy everything that tries to help, but, how can we do more?"

Christina Stock is coordinator of *Homeward,* Sacramento's homeless newspaper. For information on *Homeward,* write to: Sacramento Housing Alliance, 2125 19th St., Sacramento, CA 95818; or call (916) 442-1198

Youth Curfew Enacted

from page three

is during the hours after school and before 10 p.m. The Oakland Police Department had a shift change right when school was getting out, leaving virtually no police on the beat during the critical time after school. And injuries occur to youth with most frequency in or near their homes. Oakland youth advocacy groups lobbied successfully to reject the curfew. Rather than enact a curfew, the Oakland police restructured their shift-change hours so coverage of peak youth crime times was achieved. Efforts were also made to redirect funds from enforcement of a youth curfew into programs which directly benefited teens.

A worker for the S.F. Coalition on Homelessness said he sympathized with those seeking increased protection for the young, especially in big cities. However, he said, the answer is not criminalizing innocent behavior, but providing more positive facilities for youth to enjoy.

San Jose, the largest city in northern California, does have a youth curfew. In spite of a disproportionate ticketing of Latino youth, the parents seem to have accepted the curfew. The ACLU, at any rate, is no longer actively opposing it. But various groups like the Human Rights Defense Committee still report heavy targeting of Latino youth and discriminatory enforcement.

In many ways, youth are the most volatile element in our community. Yet arresting young people for "tarrying" in 1997 is a direct slap in their face. We are not talking about driving, drinking, making contracts, or using drugs. We are talking about the right to be in public spaces without being harassed.

The Child Protection Curfew in Santa Cruz, and curfews everywhere, criminalize the young. Youth who rebel against it will get criminal records, assurances from Santa Cruz Police Chief Belcher notwithstanding. In many cities, the second offense can be prosecuted as a misdemeanor. Infractions not speedily resolved turn into misdemeanor warrants.

In a large city such as Los Angeles, with an estimated homeless/runaway youth population of 12,000, the question of what to do with homeless youth out after curfew needs to be answered *before* a law is passed.

Emily, whose friends will be the most affected by the Santa Cruz curfew, says, "The cops don't help at all. They should just leave us alone. We're not hurting anyone. We have enough problems as it is."

Housing or Holocaust?

from page ten

receive Supplemental Social Security Income assistance. Eligibility for food stamps will be cut way back.

The new welfare system requires recipients to participate in state work programs by taking jobs that are below the minimum wage, practically slave labor. Businesses and private organizations will be given the opportunity to hire welfare recipients as cheap laborers, as if they were prisoners in the penal system.

Why is the federal government putting economic pressure on poor families with children on welfare, while providing U.S. corporations with billions of dollars in tax breaks and outright subsidies?

Military Spending Increases Inflation and Unemployment

"Arms spending undermines human security, eating up precious resources that could have been used for human development." — United Nations Human Development Report, 1994

Unemployment in the United States is increased by military spending, which produces fewer jobs per dollar than does civilian spending. As explained by economic experts, military spending accelerates inflation because workers in the military sector are paid dollars with which they buy goods and services in the civilian marketplace. Their wages have the effect of increasing the demand for goods and services, but do not provide the means for creating more jobs in the civilian sector.

In addition, the U.S. government has financed tremendous production of war materials by deficit spending, putting more dollars into the marketplace than it receives in taxes. People of color, especially African Americans, need to support efforts to slash the military budget so that the money can be used to create jobs.

Redefining Human Security

"The weapons and strategies elaborated by governments for 'defense' are largely irrelevant to the underlying instabilities and dangers of today. What is needed now is a stronger focus on the threats that touch people in their daily lives — hunger, illness, joblessness, crime. A further steady reduction in the hundreds of billions of dollars spent yearly on military programs could free the resources needed, and insure a more equitable and more peaceful world."

— Ruth Leger Sivard, World Military and Social Expenditures, 1996

According to the UN 1994 Human Development Report, "The world can never be at peace unless people have security in their daily lives." It's long past time to redefine the concept of national security based on military dominance. A new conception of human security is needed. The UN Report defines it as "one that focuses on the security of people in their homes, in their jobs, in their communities and in their environment. *Such a concept of security binds together all peoples and all nations, and it can be addressed only through sustainable human development strategies, not through acquisition of ever-more-powerful weapons."*

Abolition 2000

"Do we activists against nuclear weapons have the courage to revisit what the civil rights movement left undone? To demand the reorganization of power relationships in this country? Are we willing to take on the iron triangle of power — to resist the gang of three, the Pentagon, the corporations and Congress?" — Betty Burkes, President, U.S. Section, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, at the Northern California Abolition 2000 Conference at Laney College in Oakland, February 22, 1997

Abolition 2000: A Global Network to Eliminate Nuclear Weapons is a dynamic new international people's movement that calls for conclusion by the year 2000 of negotiations on a treaty to eliminate nuclear weapons within a timebound framework. Abolition 2000 recognizes the need for a new security paradigm. As the Abolition 2000 Statement concludes: *"Our common security requires the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. Our objective is definite and unconditional abolition of nuclear weapons."*

More than 700 non-governmental organizations from around the world and nearly 100 cities have endorsed Abolition 2000, and the list is growing. **The Northern California Abolition 2000 Campaign** invites people of color — both individuals and organizations — to join us in working to expose the truth about spending on nuclear weapons, spending which is tied to the cuts in social services and attacks on civil liberties that are undermining our HUMAN security.

If you are interested in working with us to develop an action plan that links social issues to the military budget and nuclear weapons, please contact the authors. Jackie Cabasso is Executive Director of Western States Legal Foundation, an anti-nuclear group in Oakland, (510) 839-5877. Al Jones is a Peace Education Assistant at American Friends Service Committee in San Francisco, (415) 565-0201. Al and Jackie are working together through the Northern California Abolition 2000 Campaign to eliminate nuclear weapons.

Finding the Strength to Organize for the Long Haul

by Scott Wagers



Homeless people **gather at San Jose's First Christian Church for a march protesting redevelopment policies.**

The Community Homeless Alliance Ministry spent most of the summer preparing for a potentially catastrophic winter by building its base community. In the seven years I have been an advocate in San Jose, I have never seen so many in need facing such dire circumstances.

Several factors have created this crisis:

❖ The permanent closure of National Guard Armories which housed nearly 500 homeless people in Santa Clara County.

❖ Major welfare reforms that will affect hundreds of thousands who receive SSI, AFDC and food stamps.

❖ The constant police harassment and surveillance of homeless people in parks, under bridges and in encampments under the guise of enforcing San Jose's recently approved sit/lie ordinance.

❖ Exclusionary redevelopment and city policies which have sought, not only to push homeless people and their services out of downtown San Jose, but have spent obscene amounts of taxpayer money on restaurants, shopping pavilions, luxury hotels and movie theaters that are failing.

Despite these formidable forces, the homeless and their advocates see this autumn as an opportunity for new, more dramatic actions. At the same time, the Community Homeless Alliance Ministry (CHAM) is caught in somewhat of a dilemma. As the condition of homeless people in our community grows more critical, so has the frustration of those who advocate for them. There is a growing disparity between those who want more militant action and those who feel that our people are too compromised to push harder.

Since January, we have grappled with the deaths of four homeless people who have been involved with CHAM. Just three weeks ago, a young, friendly Native American man known to his friends as Chief, who had marched with CHAM on protests in the past, died of complications arising from having a ruptured spleen. He certainly could not find adequate medical care. Tragically, Chief is the most recent casualty in our society's "war against the poor." I am afraid that this year's losses are a sign of things to come.

The trick for the advocates is to find strategies that are effective, yet not costly in terms of our human resources: human beings who already bear the staggering burdens of poverty, ill health, malnutrition, and constant harassment.

Often, CHAM is accused of "going too far" by organizing marches and putting homeless people in the face of politicians and television cameras. Others charge that CHAM is not going "far enough" because marches often do not result in tangible concessions, and politicians and public officials get off easy by exiting their buildings out the side doors (as Mayor Susan Hammer did during our last march on City Hall) and dismissing homeless demonstrations as media spectacles.

CHAM's record of civil disobedience is unparalleled by any advocacy group in San Jose. In 1992-94, CHAM engaged in a series of tent cities, sleep-outs and housing takeovers which resulted in mass arrests. Most of those arrested were homeless people, which engendered accusations of "putting homeless people's lives at risk." This erroneous claim was refuted by several CHAM advocates stating: "Homeless people chose freely to participate and for many, their lives are more at risk sleeping in the park." These events hit the sleepy town of San Jose with force and controversy.

Sister groups that grew along-side CHAM in those days either burned-up or burned-out. In one case, a growing and effective organization fighting police brutality engaged in just one ill-conceived march which sounded its death knell. This march — which ended in mass arrests — did not follow any plan and was open to the spontaneous actions of its participants.

When several people decided to block traffic, a swarm of 120 police moved in and arrested 41, including many just standing on the sidewalk. Though the police were the true culprits in creating chaos and dividing the group, many of those arrested blamed the leadership for being reckless. This division led to the dismantling of the group. One march gone awry and years of hard work, commitment and tremendous potential went South.

I learned a lesson from my friends in that group. Frankly, I'm always cognizant of that march when it comes to CHAM actions. I've seen too many grass-roots organizations tossed onto the scrap heap before their time. We don't want to make those same mistakes. Yet, we also don't want to become predictable and crippled by the paralysis of analysis and timidity.

As we move into the fall, CHAM has committed itself to walking a razor's edge between bold, dramatic actions and vigilant, effective tactics The excitement began last week with a march from First Christian Church to the Fairmont Plaza.

The march was billed as a "march for unity" — many voiced frustration about the slow pace of justice. About 70 people filled the Redevelopment offices requesting a meeting with its chief, Frank Taylor. When we were told (predictably) that he wasn't available, it was apparent that some wanted to push harder, staying in the offices all day if necessary, and even engage in civil disobedience. Others, like an elderly, long-term CHAM supporter, said, "I thought this was a spiritual pilgrimage where we are making a public witness." She was right.

Those who had helped formulate the strategy had concluded that this would be a short, symbolic march intended to unite the homeless community in the face of the impending crises. Yet those who wanted to stay were also right in believing that spontaneous action could sometimes be the best strategy when the "powers that be" aren't taking you seriously enough.

After a show of hands, I suggested that we return to the church because we had an important meeting scheduled later that afternoon with a lieutenant who heads the street crimes unit of the SJPD to discuss several instances of police harassment.

Though it was a warm-up for things to come, this march was a valuable lesson in organizing. At this week's meeting we reflected upon our dilemma. Most agreed that this winter will give us the opportunity to execute new, exciting and dramatic actions. We have already begun to conceive this plan. We will keep you posted.

Oakland Welfare Protest

from page one

above the poverty level. Damita Davis-Howard of Service Employees International Union Local 535 stressed that true welfare reform should not be punitive but must recognize that: "We need jobs at a living wage. We need health care." Her demand was echoed by boona cheema of BOSS, who said: "This fight isn't only about food, clothing and shelter, it's about living-wage jobs."

Monique Singletary, who has struggled to get on her feet with the help of the Solid Foundation, inspired the crowd when she said, "Handouts are what you give animals! Opportunities are what you give people." Politicians also came out to support the rally. State Senator Barbara Lee spoke of her ongoing battles in Sacramento against cuts in aid to the needy. Mayor Elihu Harris promised that "Oakland is not going to be a city that turns its back on the poor."

The organizing call from People for Bread, Work and Justice pointed out that public pressure and continued protests have succeeded in bringing about a few small policy changes. But we have a long struggle ahead to guarantee jobs at a livable wage for all who can work and adequate aid for those who cannot.

The rally in Oakland was part of a national day of protest with similar rallies being held in dozens of other cities across the country. An indication of the support for these actions is an impressive list of almost 100 local organizations that are part of the People for Bread, Work and Justice alliance. These organizations, including labor, social services, the religious community and many others, represent a great many people who are directly or indirectly affected by the government's cuts in welfare programs.

It was made clear on August 22 that they will continue to make their voices heard for true welfare reform.

Justice for All

from page one

Let's talk about our future and what it might look like under this new welfare policy. For those with drug-related and felony backgrounds, the policy may state that these individuals and their children may not be entitled to the federal funding it takes to live and recover from dysfunctional lifestyles through education and programs. These are the lifestyles that in many cases our system contributes to.

Don't hear me say today that we are not responsible for the way we think, feel and act. But please clearly hear me say that without opportunities for changing our lifestyles, we as a people again will have a serious problem on a tremendous scale never seen before in the history of this country. You may be asking yourself right now, how will that affect me?

Well, if you're lower class, it doesn't get much worse. But if you are upper or middle class and you feel safe, here are the hard facts — and let me be the first to tell you as an ex-firefighter, ex-city employee, recovering addict and ex-felon, and mother of three children. If I don't succeed as an individual and we as a whole people, then you become a prime target and a victim of the system. Because we can't live on earth together and be separate — it's impossible.

If I don't succeed as a parent in teaching my children the importance of a good education, the value of the work ethic or how to be responsible for themselves and to other people, then your upper and middle class children and grandchildren, my dear friends, become my children's breakfast, lunch and dinner; and where I come from you eat by any means necessary. That can be positive or very negative; it really depends on us as a whole people. And as a mother, recovering addict and productive member of our society, it makes me uneasy and it should do the same to you — because we owe it to ourselves, our children, and every human being in society the opportunity to thrive and succeed in life.

We can only achieve this goal as a people. There are only two places you can stand on this issue. That is in the problem pile or the solution pile. Those that stand in the problem pile may be in the solution pile tomorrow, and those that are in the solution pile today may not like the solutions that the problem pile comes up with, if we are not given the opportunities to change the way we think, feel and act.

Basic needs, medical care, proper housing and good education is what the problem pile is lacking. We deserve the right to be acknowledged as human beings. Handouts are what you give animals! Opportunity is what you give people. So let's all acknowledge ourselves today as a society of people! So that we are all in the solution pile tomorrow!